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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the topic of mentoring and its practical implications. Mentoring requirements have changed over time. Today's mentors are influential people who significantly help others reach major life goals. Mentoring has to address broad, dynamic goals in today's society. Benefits for mentors can include enhanced self-esteem, rejuvenated interest in work, assistance on projects, and friendship. National efforts are being made to encourage mentoring as a tool to help education meet its national goals. To achieve this, mentor programs must be well-organized, and mentors must be properly trained and monitored. Individual who serve as mentors differ according to the program. The importance of the mentor-mentee relationship is becoming pronounced in the United States today. Mentor-mentee relationships are formed in three ways: initiation by the mentee, initiation by the mentor, and serendipity. There are many different models that a mentoring program can use. This paper examines different types and forms of mentoring and their implications, focusing on business and industry mentor programs and educational mentor programs (which include programs for administrators, beginning teachers, and peers). Mentor programs have proven to be successful in all organizational facets where there is a desire to help someone achieve their maximum performance level in a given setting. (Contains 19 references.) (SM)

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Mentoring and its Implications

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Mentoring and its Implications

The term mentor is derived from the tale entitled The Odyssey, composed by Homer. In the tale Odysseus the king is preparing to fight in the Trojan War, when he realizes that he is leaving his only heir behind, Telemachus. He recognized that Telemachus needed to be coached on how to be king while he was off fighting. He gets a trusted family friend named Mentor to be Telemachus' tutor. Mentor was both wise and sensitive, two important characteristics of world-class mentoring:

> Mentor had to be a father figure, a teacher, a role model, an approachable counsellor, a trusted adviser, a challenger, an encourager, among other things, to the young Telemachus in order that he become, in time, a wise and good ruler. (Caldwell & Carter, 1993, p. 9)

The history of the term mentor is instructive. It prescribes to the nature of legacy by striving to leave behind a person with added values (Daresh & Playko, 1989). Secondly, mentoring combines the wisdom of experience and the use of sensitivity (Carruthers, 1993). Lastly, mentors are like friends in the fact that their goal is to create a safe environment for growth (Kram, 1985). In conjunction, they offer unconditional and faithful acceptance of the mentee (Bell, 1996). The purpose of this paper is to explore the topic of mentoring and its practical implications.

Modern Time Mentoring

The mentoring relationship between Mentor and Telemachus that is termed "classical" is not likely to be found in present day society. Over time the demands for needed mentorships have changed the "classical mentor" relationship because of

situational requirements (Lankard, 1996). This in turn has generated a multitude of definitions. Dodgson states "the definition of a mentor is elusive and varies according to the view of the author" (1986, p. 29). Taking this into consideration, the culmination of mentor relationships falls in the continuum between two categories: (1) professional development, and (2) professional and personal development (Dodgson, 1986). In many cases the modern time use of the word mentor is used in a pseudo manner. Phillips-Jones explains that "In modern-day terms, mentors are influential people who significantly help you reach your major life goals" (1982, p. 11). Additionally, she states that the development of a personal bond is classified as a primary mentor, while secondary mentors which are more professional in nature have a diminutive impact on their mentees. Furthermore, Clawson (1980) indicates that those concerned only with career development are quasi-mentors. These are testimony to the broad and dynamic issues in society today that mentoring has had to address.

Perceptions of Mentoring

The mentor relationship has been viewed and perceived as being a one-sided interaction, with the mentor giving and the mentee receiving (Lankard, 1996). However, this is not the case. The benefits for mentors take several forms such as: enhanced self-esteem, rejuvenated interest in their work, assistance on projects, and friendship. Moreover, the relationship will foster with time, which includes going through transitional phases. Kram (1985) states the phases to be: initiation, cultivation, separation, and redefinition. The initiation phase entails the mentee and the mentor identifying each other and beginning to develop a relationship. The cultivation phase

includes all activities involved in the process of passing information from mentor to mentee. The separation phase is when the mentor and mentee no longer interact in the same manner as stated before. Finally, the redefinition phase describes when the mentee might seek advice from their mentor on occasions (Kridel, Bullough, & Shaker, 1996).

Efforts are being made nationally to encourage mentoring as a tool to help education meet its national goals. It has been noted that in order for a mentor program to be successful they should be well designed, operated, and outcome driven entities. In conjunction, the mentors must be properly trained and monitored, and there should be sufficient funding (Million, 1988). Looking at the total perspective mentoring is a "balancing act between two people from different worlds" (Lund, 1992, p. 7). The interaction in the mentoring relationship creates a unique synergism between the mentor and mentee. This synergistic relationship is one avenue that can be utilized to "fill the gap" for the individuals that need help grasping educational concepts, guidance, and aid in obtaining financial assistance to reach the set goals (Lankard, 1996). Advocates of mentoring state that one-on-one mentoring has proven to be cost effective because of its high output variables (Zey, 1985). However, it must be noted that mentoring is a serious endeavor to undertake. Marc Freedman, a leading researcher on mentoring indicates: "mentoring appears simple, mentoring is direct, mentoring is cheap" (Lund, 1992, p. 30). The earlier statement conveys the view that many individuals have in reference to mentoring until the task is undertaken.

Who Mentors and Who gets Mentored?

Individuals that serve as mentors will variate with each unique program. For the most part people from all levels are asked to volunteer their time. For example, in business top executive officers are solicited as well as retired employees (Carruthers, 1993; Clawson, 1980). In education it can take the form of full professor to assistant professor, professor to college student, college student to middle or high school student, and senior students to first year students in the same school (Morrissey & Helfrich, 1996). On the other end of the continuum, the mentee can be just about anyone as well. The mission and goals of the program will determine the type of clientele that will be attracted (Lund, 1992).

The Importance of the Mentor-Mentee Relationship

Mentoring as been one of the fastest growing aspects of literature today (Guetzloe, 1997). That is a great indicator that the importance of the mentor-mentee relationship is becoming pronounced in the United States today. The mentor relationship can help individuals overcome difficulties whether it is helping an associate adapt to a new job or helping a younger associate become more versed in the profession. Anxiety comes into play in both cases and the level of anxiety can be eased by having a mentor to help guide you through the new or different situation (Kram, 1985; Zey, 1985). Change for many people is a terrifying event. However, many individuals can adapt to changes quickly while others need a little help. For the individuals that do not adapt easily, they need to be acculturated to the new or different environment (Kram, 1985; Zey, 1985). In this stage the individual will learn the new

rules and norms for the environment which they will have to interact. While in this stage, the mentee will be prepared by their mentor to help minimize their dubious experiences. This is one of the most important concepts of mentoring (Carruthers, 1993).

Dodgson submits that there are three ways mentor-mentee relationships are formed. They include: (1) those initiated by the mentee, (2) those initiated by the mentor, and (3) serendipity (1986, p. 13). Furthermore, relationships are formed through formal and informal methods (Carruthers, 1993). Formal mentoring occurs when it is directed by an individual in a position of authority. This method is most beneficial when the mentor and mentee are matched based on common professional criteria. While on the other hand, informal mentoring is formed when the relationship is a mutual agreement. This agreement is met because of a natural gravitation toward one another due to commonalities. In conjunction, Zey (1985) articulated that the most productive mentoring relationships have been those that allow the participants to freely choose one another. However, it must be noted that free choice is not always possible or practical in an organization.

There are many different models that a mentoring program can subscribe. These can include an "one-shot" effort to offer guidance or remedy problems to relationships that are so intense that they "fall just short of adoption." In fact, the different models have many goals in common such as: developing a learning paradigm, the development of social and cultural awareness, academic and career counseling among others. The focus of the mentoring program can be to address a

single issue or multiple issues that may be plaguing the social community (Lund, 1992). The remainder of this research will explore the different types and forms of mentoring and its implications.

Implications of Mentoring: Programs that work

Business and Industry Mentor Programs

The majority of formal mentor programs are one-to-one in nature, however, business and industry organizations are moving toward group mentor programs. Coley (1996) describes a formal group mentor program within a high-tech work environment. The program is designed as a triad that consists of a mentor, manager, and mentee. The objectives of this group mentor program are to improve technology transfer in the product divisions, institute cross-functional networking, develop technological skills across the organization, and facilitate the mentee's development (p. 46). Each member of the mentor triad has specific responsibilities. Managers serve as coaches and work with the mentees on developing their plans and applied projects. The mentor, a senior manager, is responsible for sharing his/her knowledge, advising, identify goals, contacts and resources, set personal development expectations, and help mentees implement an applied project. The matchmaking process of the program is handled by the program manager. The program manager briefs the managers, on all levels, on the goals and objectives of the mentor program. The senior level manager identifies high-potential employees and managers as candidates for a mentee or mentor, respectively. Mentees have a choice between three mentors and the options are diverse in nature.

Furthermore, at the start of the program mentors receive information on their roles and responsibilities, and a newsletter is distributed to mentors every six months. A skills assessment test is used to assess the mentee's current skill level and allows the mentee to establish personal-development plans. A number of tools should be used for evaluation of the mentor program in terms of its strengths and weaknesses. These tools may consist of, but are not limited to, profile data, interviews, and informal feedback (Coley, 1996).

Educational Mentor Programs

In recent years, public education systems are using formal mentor programs to promote professional development and performance of teachers, administrators, as well as the student body (Daresh & Playko, 1992; Russ, 1993). Over the years, many formal mentor programs in education have become increasingly popular, such as first-year teacher mentor programs, administrative mentor programs, University and K-12 mentorship programs, and first-year student mentor programs.

Administrative

Professional development is a critical aspect for potential administrators to master. Formal administrative mentor programs have proven to be effective in helping new administrators develop professionally (Daresh & Playko, 1992; 1989). Most administrative mentor programs are implemented to encourage new administrators to take risks which will help them develop leadership skills, and assist administrators in dealing with complexities associated with their jobs (Playko, 1991). Furthermore, Playko (1991) notes that mentor programs can help administrators in five areas:

gaining knowledge of the district's curriculum and instructional resources; 2) sharing information about effective leadership practices; 3) provide the opportunity for administrators to serve as role models for completing tasks; 4) sharing effective practices and strategies for developing better school relations; and 5) helping mentees develop personal insight regarding appropriate work environment to improve student learning (p. 126).

The Danforth Foundation Program for the Preparation of School Principals is an example of an effective administrative mentor program. Schools that implement this mentor program vary in nature, but they all have at least three practices in common: 1) emphasize learning through experience; 2) establish positive and collaborative relationships with local school systems as the basis of any university-based effort; and 3) designate individual experienced school administrators to serve as ongoing mentors to the candidates selected for participation in each local effort. Mentors as well as mentees benefit from participating in administrative mentor programs, therefore, administrative mentor programs are likely to become increasingly popular as they are viewed as strategies used to attract effective leaders (Daresh & Playko, 1992).

First-Year Teachers

The transition from being a student in a class to teaching a class can be quite a challenge for first-year teachers. Formal and institutionally supported mentor programs help first-year teachers adjust to difficulties such as communicating with parents, classroom management, curriculum development, and becoming and feeling a part of

the team (Prosise & Heller, 1993). First-year teachers have reported great satisfaction in being a part of a mentor program that is designed to help them overcome the adversities that first-year teachers often encounter (Million, 1988).

Planning, training, and commitment should be priority when establishing a mentor program for first-year teachers (Prosise & Heller, 1993). It must be noted that all teachers are not fit to serve as mentors. Previous research shows that effective mentoring is related to specific personality traits of mentors such as: experience, caring, confidence, security, warmth, and flexibility (Carruthers, 1993; Daresh & Playko, 1992; Zey, 1985). First-year teachers should be matched with mentors with compatible teaching styles and similar belief systems. When possible, mentors and mentees should be able to choose each other. A training/orientation program should be devised to familiarize the mentor and the mentee of the procedures, goals, and objectives of the mentor program. Mentor relationships should not last longer than one year to avoid the first-year teacher from becoming dependent on the mentor (Million, 1988). First-year teacher mentor programs not only benefit the mentor and the mentee, but serve as a way to promote interaction, unity, and team effort, which collectively have a positive effect on the school climate (Prosise & Heller, 1993).

Peer

Peer mentor programs, whether they are a collaborative efforts between higher education and the public school system or whether they are institutionally operated, have proven to be effective in terms of providing social support and enhancing learning experiences for the student body (Russ, 1993; Morrissey & Helfrich, 1996).

Morrisey and Helfrich (1996) describes a peer mentor program that is used at the University of Delaware to aid first year student-athletes in their transition from high school to college. The program is designed so that older, more experienced student-athletes share their experiences, views, and supportive information with first year student-athletes. First year student-athletes as well as mentors benefit from participating in the peer mentor program. First year student-athletes are expected to benefit academically and socially. Mentors benefit by having the opportunity to share in a leadership experience that does not directly involve competing. Mentors also gain self-esteem, self competence, and a greater sense of cultural awareness.

The University of Delaware's athletic department has outlined a process for implementing the peer mentor program. The first task is mentor selection in which the potential mentors complete an application packet. The applications are evaluated and interviews are scheduled. The next step is mentor training. After the mentors have been selected, they are required to attend and evaluate the mentor training session. The mentors are then divided into groups and first year student-athletes are placed accordingly. Next, first-year student-athletes attend an orientation meeting. Here, they are introduced to their mentor and are encouraged to complete a survey regarding their background and expectations of the university. Each peer mentor group consist of three to four mentors assigned to fifteen first year students. The program is supervised by staff to monitor activities and first year students give feedback, and serve as a resource for mentors who may have difficulties. Mentors are required to meet with supervisors periodically, in accordance with group meetings, to hand in Meeting

Summary Sheets which entails information about the attendance, activities, and additional information. This serves as a baseline for future improvement of the peer mentor program (Morrisey & Helfrich, 1996).

In conclusion, mentor programs have proved to be successful in all organizational facets where there is a desire to help someone achieve their maximum performance level in a given setting. Over the years, mentor programs have been provided in many different forms by teachers, counselors, parents, friends, siblings, co-workers, and others to initiate and reinforce learning (Lankard, 1996). Hence, the use of mentor programs has allowed and enabled the United States to grow and compete with the global community. Mentoring has given the United States added advantages that has aided America to continue to be a "Super Power."

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